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ABSTRACT

Some general observations may be made about standards for college libraries in other nations. Although they may not be called "standards", nevertheless, standards have been devised; most by professional groups, some by government agencies, and a few by ad hoc committees. Such standards are rarely enforced, and are often seen as an ideal, a means of appraisal, or a stimulus to development. There is little documentation available on the basis from which standards were developed. A majority of the standards place heaviest emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative elements, and are most concerned with (in descending order of importance) size of collection, budget, seating and floor area, and size of staff. Finally, few nations are satisfied with existing standards, particularly since consensus on the subject is difficult to achieve. (LS)

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FOREIGN STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE LIBRARIES

by

David Kaser

A number of nations have drafted standards in recent years for guiding the development of their academic libraries. Although there is great diversity among their styles, formats and stated pruposes, it is nonetheless possible to make some general observations about them which might be helpful in the revision of ALA's "Standards for College Libraries." This paper will attempt to develop some of those observations. It is limited to foreign standards which apply to institutions that are most similar to American baccalaureate and masters level institutions.

1) The word "standards" is shunned by their makers almost as often as it is used, giving rise to a great many euphemisms and quasi-synonyms for it in a multiplicity of languages. In the interests of brevity, however, this paper will use the word "standards" throughout, even though doing so may in some cases violate the careful semantic concerns of the authorities cited.

2) Standards appear most often to have been promulgated by professional associations, secondmost by government agencies, and occasionally by ad hoc groups of influential librarians and/or educators. It is not unusual for standards to have

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been drafted and proposed by committees but to fail thereafter to gain ratification in the parent body. In such cases they nonetheless often continue for years to be used, somewhat diffidently perhaps, as unofficial or "draft" standards.

3) Few standards seem to be considered enforceable except by persuasion, and consequently they are often couched in such terms as "suggest," "should have," and "recommend" rather than "require" or "must have." The only exceptions noted are in Socialist States where somewhat different concepts of requirements are possible. For university libraries in the USSR, for example, "the standards, established for the whole network of Soviet Libraries, are compulsory,"[1] although even here it is unclear just how they are enforced.

4) Considering the obviously extensive effort that has gone into the preparation of standards worldwide, there is a surprising lack of working papers and back-up documents recording the rationale or explaining the calculations upon which their quantitative elements are based. Some standards appear, or are avowed, to be derived from other standards. Others have clear relationships to human characteristics, as the amount of floor area required for a library seat. Others, however--such as collection and staff sizes--appear to be largely normative in origin with primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive foundations. After a thorough review of the literature on the subject the University of Birmingham's K.W. Humphrey reports his "impression that the size recommended was in no way related to what was required but rather the

highest figure the government or other authority might be prepared to accept."[2]

5) Existing standards tend more often to comprise quantitative than qualitative elements; where one element is lacking it is usually the latter. Yet limits are noted in the value of quantitative standards. Toshio Iwasaru of Kyoto University touches upon a key such limitation when he points out that "each university library has its own traditions and environment. Therefore, to evaluate each unique library by a quantitative standard cannot solve any problem of that particular library, but can only point out some deviations from the general tendency."[3]

6) Quantitative statements most often concern the size of the book collection, with the next highest frequency devoted to the educational and general budget (variously defined) to be used for libraries, followed by the number of seats and amount of floor area required for them, and finally the size of the staff.

7) The number of volumes recommended ranges from a low of 30,000 in the Republic of China[4] to a high of 150,000 in Great Britain's polytechnics.[5] Although all standards seem to base this requirement in one way or another upon institutional program objectives, two fundamental positions are discernible in the way such objectives are utilized. One simply assumes that any comprehensive college curriculum should be supported by a comprehensive book collection of a certain minimum size; this position is represented by German

"suggestions" that libraries in the technical universities should have at least 100,000 volumes.[6] The second approach attempts to get closer to specific institutional objectives by requiring a certain number of volumes for each subject represented in the academic program and/or for each registered student; thus Japan would have at least 8,000 volumes available for the first two courses in literature plus 2,000 for each additional course in literature,[7] and the Republic of Korea would have at least 30 volumes per student plus 5,000 additional for each department respresented in the college.[8]

8) The percent of institutional budget to be allocated to libraries usually falls between 4 and 10. British and Canadian thinking, for example, calls for approximately 6, while the Japanese would spend 3 for materials[9] with total library expenditures ranging to 10.[10] The Republic of China on the other hand, uses a different approach entirely, advocating a simple 3 percent annual growth rate in the collections.[11]

9) Seating requirements range from 10 to 25 percent of the student body, with from 2 to 2.32 square meters of floor space allocated to each seat.

10) The literature is replete with statements as to the purposes to which standards may be put. Virtually all of them, however, are subsumed within the following oft-quoted sentence from the Standards of South African Public Libraries:

> Standards may be interpreted variously as the pattern of an ideal, a model procedure, a measure for appraisal, a stimulus for future development and

> improvement and as an instrument to assist decision and action not only by librarians themselves but by laymen concerned indirectly with the institution, planning and administration of library services.[12]

11) As a final observation it should be noted that few nations that have developed standards for their academic libraries are satisfied with them. As indicated earlier, a number of countries have failed to find adequate consensus to gain their adoption once written. Such is presently the case, for example, of university standards written within the Canadian library community.[13] In others, such as Australia, librarians have found it difficult to accept standards written outside the library community.[14] In fact, in the making of standards, as in so many other endeavors involving large numbers of people, finding consensus on a finished product may be the most difficult part of the task.

FOOTNOTES

1. K. W. Humphreys, "Standards in University Libraries," Libri, XX (1970), 151.

2. Ibid., 152.

3. Toshio Iwasaru, "Japanese University Library Standards and Surveys," Japan-United States Conference on Libraries and Information Science in Higher Education, University and Research Libraries in Japan and the United States. Chicago, ALA, 1972. p. 99.

4. Library Association of China, Chinese Library Standards, 1966. Part II, No. 10.

5. K. W. Humphreys, "Standards for Libraries in Great Britain," Library Trends, XXI (1972/73), 321.

6. Empfehlungen des Wissenschaftsrates Zum Ausbau der Wissenschaftliche Einrichtungen. Teil II. Wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken. 1964.

7. Japan, Ministry of Education: Ordinance No.28, October 22, 1956, amended by Ordinance No. 7, April 1, 1966.

8. Kang, Chu-Chin, "Korean Libraries: Past and Present The Role of Libraries in the Process of Modernization. Seoul, Korean Library Association, 1969. p. 31.

9. Humphreys, Libri, op.cit., 149-50.

10. Iwasaru, op.cit., p. 95.

11. Library Association of China, op.cit.

12. South African Library Association Sub-Committee on Public Library Standards. Standards for South African Public Libraries, 2d ed. rev. Potchefstroom, 1968. p. 11

13. Margaret Beckman, "CACUL University Library Standards," January 26, 1973. Unpublished.

14. V. Crittenden, "The Second Wark Report and the So-Called Standards," Australian College and Research Libraries I (1970), 3-4.